

MORE THAN A COINCIDENCE

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Having just completed writing the piece on Sloper's Penny Red advertising block with T/B4C^o (Bulletin 284) I turned up the F.A.Hancock advertisement shown in Bulletin 270 as I remembered at the time there was also speculation as to whether the perfin die F.A.H was known to exist. Looking at the quality of the "stamp" it is also clearly just a line engraved block illustration made for the advertisement and not an actual penny red as might have been thought of at first. Then to my surprise I noticed that both illustrating blocks had the same corner letters i.e. BK/KB.



That both illustration blocks should have the same corner letters is more than a coincidence - either Sloper copied the advert of Hancock or Hancock copied Sloper's. My first reaction was that Hancock copied Sloper but it is not so clear. Hancock's advert in Bulletin 270 dates from 1878 but he first set up in business late in 1873 and was probably advertising from an early date. Two Sloper adverts are shown in Nelson's book with the T/B&C^o die illustration; one is clearly dated June 1878 but the other is undated. At one time this undated advert was thought to be very early as it's addressed from Walbrook House which Sloper left in 1875, but it mentions postcards which were not introduced until October 1870 so probably can be dated to 1871-1875.

So on balance then it would appear that Hancock saw Sloper's advert, thought that the use of a perfined stamp as an illustration was a good idea and asked the printer to make a block like it for his advert but with the initials F.A.H. The printer would not have realised the significance of the corner letters and would have copied them as well.

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